Chapter 4: The Paschal tribulation, the Death of Jesus, and the New Exodus

'All of these various conclusions lead us to a single overarching question, which we have left relatively untouched up to this point. How did Jesus view himself in relation to the tribulation?'

To answer the above question Pitre looks at three main blocks of the Jesus tradition.

1) Mark 10:35-45: The ransom for many and the End of Exile
2) Jesus' words about the death of the shepherd (Mark 14:26-27)
3) Prayer in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42)

1) Mark 10:35-45: The ransom for many and the End of Exile

Pitre, despite several notable scholars who argue otherwise, treats Mark 10:35-45 as a single unit.

The disciples request that they should 'sit, one at your [Jesus'] right hand and one at your [Jesus'] left in your glory' (mark 10:37). There request is one of 'eschatological glorification and rule' in which the disciples, with echoes of Daniel 7, seek to rule when the kingdom fully arrives. Although their in no specific mention of 'kingdom' in this passage a kingdom reading is confirmed by noticing (1) the word καθίζω is used by the disciples which is not the usual word for reclining at a Banquet but appears to be that of sitting in a royal context. (2) The language of sitting on Jesus right and left hand and that of 'glory' is also regal and is a frequent image in Old Testament and second temple literature. Pitre's case can be made stronger by making the obvious point, although Pitre does not mention it, of raeding it alongside Matthew 19:28/Luke 22:28-30.

Matthew 19:28 (ESV)
28 Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the

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1 JTEE 382
2 JTEE 391
3 This is discussed by Meier 3.218
4 It's must basic meaning is that of sitting in general but it can, at times, seem to a more technical term for political/regal leadership.

Among both Jews and Gentiles public officials are spoken of as sitting (cf. 1 Cor 6:4), and possession of higher office is indicated by the posture of sitting. Thrones, however, were reserved for rulers (John 19:13; Acts 12:21; cf. also Acts 2:30; Exod 11:5; 12:29; 1 Kgs 1:17; 3:6, 8:25). The high-priestly and judicial offices (when they were not united under the regency) also had the dignity associated with sitting (cf. Acts 23:3; 25:6, 17). This special distinction was not given to lower administrative officials and governing bodies. For the pious believer, however, it is not the king who is enthroned, but God himself. The king is merely a visible representative.

5 Examples include LXX 1 Kgs 2:19, Ps 45:6-7, t. Abr. 12:8
twelve tribes of Israel.\(^6\)

The use of Matthew 19:28/Luke 22:28-30 make the point of Mark 10:37 clear, for according to Pitre, the disciples are looking to a time when the 'exile will be over' and they will judge the twelve tribes of Israel.

The likelihood of Daniel 7 being the background of the disciples question is confirmed, for Pitre, 'by Jesus' own response: for he counters the disciples' desire for exaltation—which drew on Daniel— with images from the very same text: the example of 'great' Gentile rulers who are tyrants (Dan 7:3-8,11-12), the language of 'serving rather than being served (Daniel 7:14,27) and perhaps more importantly, the promise of suffering of the disciples.'\(^7\)

Due to the frequency of these Danielic themes in Mark 10 it is unlikely that it is not the implicit story from which Jesus is drawing. This allows Pitre to draw some conclusions about the meaning of Mark 10:45.

The 'son of man' links to Daniel 7. For Pitre the evidence against a 'suffering servant' echoes are not compelling but Pitre seeks to explore the links between 'the death of Jesus and the tribulation' by noting three Old testament backgrounds particularly that of Daniel 7.

(1) The Son of Man, will suffer and die in the tribulation\(^8\)

In Dan 7 the saints of the most high suffer (Dan 7:21, 7:25). The 'suffering of the 'one like the son of man'...can be inferred from the angelic interpretation of the vision in Dan 7:19-27\(^9\). The death of a messiah figure, the atoning function of the tribulation and the end of exile can be found in Dan 9:24-27.

(2) The purpose of the sufferings of the tribulation is to atone for Israel's sin- Daniel 9:24
(3) The forgiveness of sins will bring the end of exile\(^10\)- Daniel 9:27

The conclusion which Pitre brings to this is

(4) The 'ransom for many' refers to the End of Exile: ie. The release (ransom) of the lost tribes (the 'many') from among the nations.

Jesus, from Pitre's perspective, brings together the themes of Daniel 7 and Daniel 9, . 'In other words, for Jesus, the royal 'one like a son of man' who comes during the tribulation (Daniel 7) and the 'Messiah, a prince,' who also comes during the tribulation (Daniel 9) are

\(^7\) JTEE 394
\(^8\) JTEE 399-400
\(^9\) JTEE 398
the same eschatological figure.\textsuperscript{11}

Once this fusion of Daniel 7 and 9 are accepted Jesus' references to his own suffering as baptism become more clear as the death of the Messiah in Daniel 9:27 is described as coming 'with a flood', and the 'many' finds a parallel Daniel 9:27.

Pitre does not deny that Is 53 may be behind Mark 10:45 but thinks that to much scholarly attention has been placed on Is 53 that the use of ransom/redeemed language has not been traced sufficiently throughout the Old Testament. There are several passages which 'use the language of 'ransom' (often translated as redemption)' to refer to the first Exodus. See Exodus 6:6-8, Micah 6:4, Ps 87:42-55) and Is 51:10-11.\textsuperscript{12} Pitre also finds that the language of ransom/redeemed is to be found as a description of the New Exodus Is 43:1-19, Is 52:7-12, Jer 31:7-12, Mic 4:1-10, Zech 10:6-12\textsuperscript{13}

To add to this compelling case Pitre also emphasises that the language of a multitude/many looking forward to the 'restoration of the twelve tribes' \textsuperscript{14} finds parallels with the first exodus (Ex 6:6-8, Ex 1:9; 19:38-39,) and the New Exodus (Zech 10:8, Jer 31:8,11, Hos 1:10-11, Is 53:11). This theme is also found in late second temple literature (4 Ezra 13:39-40, Ant 11.133).

Pitre reaches the following conclusions, which I quote, due their significance for my own study, at length.

'Jesus' words about 'ransom for many' in the end appear to be a combination of figures from Daniel and Isaiah that draws on their common hope for a New Exodus, the restoration of Israel, and the ingathering of the Gentiles. In both, the exile is only brought to an end by a climatic period of tribulation, or affliction in which the key figure, the Messiah/Son of Man, or the Servant dies, and thereby atones for the sins of Israel that have led her into exile in the first place.'\textsuperscript{15}

'Jesus is using the language of the Old Testament prophets to declare that the Son of Man will give his life in order to release ('ransom') the scattered exiles of Israel (the many). That is, he will give his life, in a kind of new Passover, in order to bring about the New Exodus. Jesus is saying that the Son of Man as Messiah will perish in the tribulation, the climax of the Exile, and that his life will function as a 'ransom' for the 'many' who have been scattered. His death will atone for sin and will restore the tribes of Jacob and raise up the survivors of Israel, bringing them-and according to Isaiah, the gentiles as well—back to Zion in the long-awaited Return from Exile, the New Exodus.'\textsuperscript{16}

If we read these conclusions alongside his interpretation of Mark 13 we are faced with a problem.

\textsuperscript{11} JTEE 403
\textsuperscript{12} Also Exodus 15:13,16, Deut 7:8...etc JTEE 409 FN 84
\textsuperscript{13} Further examples are given in JTEE fn 91
\textsuperscript{14} JTEE 413
\textsuperscript{15} JTEE 417
\textsuperscript{16} JTEE 417
Mark 10:45: Jesus endures tribulation and dies, bringing the 'return from exile'
Mark 13: Jesus predicts a future tribulation in the destruction of Jerusalem. This tribulation will result in the arrival of the Messiah and 'return from exile'

We see here a problem regarding chronology. Did Jesus see both events (his death/destruction of Jerusalem) as accomplishing the same task? Did Jesus change his mind regarding the tribulation? Was Jesus, in his own death, acting out the future tribulation?

2) Jesus' words about the death of the shepherd (Mark 14:26-27)

As is no surprise to the reader Pitre makes a link between Mark 14:26-27 and the tribulation. He does this by noting that Jesus words come from the book of Zechariah and that Jesus delivers these words whilst on the Mount of Olives. The location is significant as it shows that 'he is not only alluding to Zechariah 13 but also evoking Zechariah 14, which describes a period of great tribulation that immediately follows the death of the shepherd and is geographically centered on the Mount of Olives.\\(^{17}\)

Jesus, according to Pitre, 'is linking his death with the onset of the Great tribulation... Jesus is placing his own fate and the fate of his disciiples squarely in the middle of the tribulation described therein.\\(^{18}\)

In Mark 14:28 Jesus says 'But after I am raised up' which Pitre argues, on the basis of Is 26:16-21, 27:12-13, Ezek 37:1-28 that we see a common eschatological sequence of tribulation preceding restoration of Israel and resurrection of the dead. Jesus is thus saying that although his death will trigger the tribulation, a day of resurrection and ingathering will follow.

'The[Old Testament/Second Temple background to Mark 14:26-28] not only tie the death of Jesus to the great tribulation, but also to the exile and restoration of Israel, the testing of an eschatological remnant, the coming of the Davidic Messiah, and even to the resurrection of the dead. In this instance, a tiny tree has borne a great deal of exegetical fruit.\\(^{19}\)

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17 JTEE 458
18 JTEE 460
19 JTEE 466
3) **Prayer in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42)**

Pitre calls to our attention four key elements from this passage

| 1) The setting of the Mount of Olives | Gethsemane is on the Mount of Olives. Therefore the location is eschatological and linked to the tribulation (Zech 13:7-14:15, Mark 13:1-27, 14:26-28). It is also Messianic (2 Sam 15:23, 30). |
| 2) Jesus' language of the 'hour' | Mark 14:35, Mark 14:41 | This 'hour' is 'the hour of Jesus' handing over by Judas has an eschatological significance that is rooted in the handing of the son of Man during the tribulation' (Dan 11:35, 40, 45, 7:25). |
| 3) Jesus' image of the cup | Mark 14:36 | The word cup has previously been used to tie Jesus death to the baptism of suffering. (Mark 10:49-50). There is also a link between the cup in Mark 10:49-50 and the last supper. The tribulation is the eschatological passover. |
| 4) Jesus' command that the disciples do not enter into 'peirasmos' | Mark 14:38-39 | The word peirasmos can be used in a specific way to refer to the 'eschatological time of trial' (Deut 4:34, 7:19, 29:3). |

Pitre, draws the following conclusions,

>'In sum, a close exegesis of the account of Gethsemane in Mark 14:32-42 reveals that several important elements serve both to tie the death of Jesus to the eschatological tribulation and to depict this coming ordeal as a kind of eschatological Passover, a final peirasmos in which the Passover Lamb (and perhaps some of his sheep) will suffer and die'.

**Concluding Remarks and Potential for Further Research**

Pitre's work has shown that a reading of the Jesus tradition, with a tribulation/return from exile hermeneutic is fruitful and that it has the potential to cast light on several of Jesus' sayings. Jesus, it seems, on this basis of this study, lived and died with a belief in a time of crisis—that is tribulation—which would be followed by the 'return from exile'. It is historically defensible that a man living in second temple Judaism may see his life, ministry and death, and that of his community as being decisive in this eschatological drama. If we assume the historical reliability of the gospels, then we

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20 There is some scholarly debate on this but Pitre is with the majority
21 JTEE 482
22 JTEE 491
can say, on the basis of Pitre's study, that Jesus saw his own death as part of this tribulation. However, some confusion arises as to how this can be squared with the eschatological predictions of Mark 13, which predict tribulation with the destruction of Jerusalem. Further research is needed in this area.

At times Pitre notices Old Testament parallels which are far from obvious. However, the frequency of these allusions mean that even if a good number were discounted his thesis could still stand. A thorough study is needed which shows the use of Old Testament tribulation themes within the second temple period, and whether Jesus, as a scripture prophet, was drawing on an existing hermeneutical tradition.

I have suggested that the book of Malachi may provide a Old Testament resource for looking at tribulation themes in the ministry of Jesus.

Pitre disagrees with N.T. Wright on the nature of the exile. If Pitre is assumed to be correct, what implications would this have for Wright's overall approach?

It may be possible to look at whether Paul had heard of this tribulation/return from exile understanding of Jesus ministry, and to ask whether he can cast any light on the Mark 10:45/Mark 13 problem, and also the nature of the lost tribes. i.e. Are the gentiles the lost tribes?